

**BOARD OF FINANCE
BUDGET HEARING
TUESDAY, MARCH 29, 2005**

Board of Finance Members Present: Robert K. Pagani-Chairman, Richard J. Cleary, Robert J. Clements, Vaughn E. Gerber, Mark A. Joyse, Barry C. Pinto

Others Present: D. Milanovich-First Sel, N. Way, M. Stupinski, L. Miller, M. Leighton-Selectmen, G. Daigle, J. Snyder-Budget Advisory, R. Tedford-Dir P&R, P. Michaud-Dir DPW, A. Lawrence-Fire Marshal, Sgt. W. Konieczny-State Trooper, J. Strieber-EVAC, Parks & Rec Commission Members, Residents.

Chairman Robert Pagani opened the hearing at 7:35 pm. He told the Board that he had attended last night's Planning & Zoning Commission meeting and asked them to consider how long it would take to implement the Plan of Development and zoning regulations associated with that if these items were funded in July. They are going to hold a special meeting to discuss and outline what they can get done in a 12 month period. He also spoke with John Strieber this week about the computers that the Ambulance Corps is requesting. He reminded the Board that the Public Hearing on April 12 would be at the High School Auditorium as well as the Town Meeting. The High School dedication is planned for May 4, 2005.

First Selectman Dennis Milanovich presented the Board of Selectmen's budget for FY 2005-06. He stated that the important items in next year's budget are the items to get the Town through its growth and to manage land use. There is \$150,000 in the Planning and Zoning Commission's budget for two consultants to do the Plan of Development and to amend the zoning regulations. It may be overly aggressive to think that both of these items can be done in a 12 month period, but the regulations may be able to be started before the end of 05-06 FY if the Plan of Development is done early. The Conservation Commission has \$30,000 for fees associated with open space purchases.

Under account 1090-Miscellaneous there is \$60,000 for GIS Services. SBC flies over 1/3 of the State of Connecticut each year to photograph. This year they are scheduled to do the portion with Ellington in it. They take pictures with a graphic digital laser camera. This year includes Ellington but not the panhandle that goes to Crystal Lake. They have negotiated with SBC to add the panhandle for an extra cost. The \$60,000 purchases the digitized information and incorporates it into our GIS system to bring it up to date. The Board of Selectmen tonight authorized \$23,000 to initiate the process. This will solve some of the Tax Assessor's and Town Planner's mapping problems.

Another item that the First Selectmen mentioned was that the State of Connecticut's reimbursement for Education was initially at 50%. It is now 35%, therefore there is 15% that the Town has to make up right away from taxpayers.

He then went into the operating budgets. The First Selectman's increases are salaries and the newsletters that were reduced last year. The Tax Assessor's budget was increased for salaries and mapping. The Town Clerk's budget increased for Codification of Laws which are bound books and anticipates updates from the zoning regulations and new personnel policies. This item was a capital improvement item last year. Town Counsel looks unusually high because it is

reduced each year. This year legal services were used for land use boards plus there were labor negotiations for the constables' union contract. Probate fees increased. The Town Planner's budget was increased due to the new zoning enforcement officer to be hired. The salary offered is higher due to the Town's requiring him to have certain professional certifications.

Mr. Milanovich stated that he spoke with the Planning & Zoning Commission chairman regarding the current fees for services. They are set by ordinance. The Planning & Zoning Commission will reexamine the fees rather than the Board of Selectmen. The First Selectmen is agreeable to this.

The Police Dept. budget increase is for salaries due to the current contract negotiations with the State Police Union. They have budgeted the highest estimate. There is also \$6,000 in new constables' outfits and equipment in this budget. A number of current constables are nearing retirement and there will be some younger hires being trained.

The Emergency Management budget has increased due to an increase of 4 hrs/week for the coordinator per the First Selectmen's initiative. The Homeland Security issues that are coming to the town are becoming more numerous and he does not have the time to attend all the meetings. There is an office at the High School for this employee.

The Fire Marshal's budget is increased for additional part time help for inspections and the training associated with that. There are fewer fires now than 25 years ago and the dollar fire loss is lower also. The Fire Marshal's office is doing a good job and has been a part time department for the last 25 years. They did 700 inspections last year.

Mr. Joyse asked about the Public Safety Commission and how much money to put into their budget to get them going again. Mr. Milanovich stated that he is leaving that up to the Board of Finance to fund the committee as it sees fit.

Public Works – Mr. Michaud outlined his budget. The 10 year overtime average is 225 but 200 hours are being budgeted. The Tree Warden account is up from last year at \$20,000. New Equipment of \$12,600 will be used for welding screens. Equipment Maintenance is based on a 5-year average of \$82,000 up from \$65,000. There are 6 additional miles of road to plow due to new subdivisions over the past few years. He told the Board that he would be looking for a new large truck next year. He has 9 now and needs 10. Gas and diesel fluctuates with usage and price.

The Park & Recreation maintenance budget has a new item in it for \$12,058 to skin the girl's softball field at the High School. Ellington is one of the only towns that have not moved to a skinned infield. The Director and First Selectman have met with Parks & Rec members and others on this. The Booster Club has offered to donate \$5,000 which leaves \$7,058 to be funded by the Town. There is some volunteer help in place. The Town is requesting that the field be done with the same materials that the boy's field is done in. This is called Diamondtex which comes from Pennsylvania and is expensive. The Parks & Recreation members suggest that there is a less expensive material that can be used. The DPW Director does not like the alternate

material. The Town also feels that there is a liability issue when volunteers do the work. The First Selectmen stated that this has become an issue in Town. There are more and more groups wanting to construct capital projects with volunteers and this presents a liability to the Town. He feels there should be standards set up for these situations. There is also the issue of the continuing maintenance by the Town after the initial construction. Selectman Miller stated that he heard at the Parks & Recreation meeting that the alternate materials may be superior to the Diamondtex. It was concluded that there is universal support for this field modification and that the Parks & Recreation Dept. and Public Works Dept. will get the field done at a price the Town can afford.

The Winter Account is \$129,000 up from last year's request of \$105,000. Town Aid summer is \$196,215; some of that increase is due to hiring outside contractors to do street sweeping. Our machine is very old and tired. The Tipping Fees for trash have stayed the same at \$70/ton for msw and \$85/ton for bulky waste. The Pick Up Fee from Waste Management is based on CPI increase and is billed to taxpayers. The Recycling is based on CPI increase also. The Household Hazardous Waste budget stayed the same.

The streetlights account has decreased. The Town Engineer budget is shared by DPW, land use staff and other commissions. There was discussion as to why the engineering fees are not passed on to developers. The way the WPCA does it is to estimate and bill the developer and as the work progresses; it is subtracted from this account. Any fees left over are reimbursed to the developer or billed to them if they exceed the estimate. Mr. Pagani feels strongly that these fees should be passed on to developers not taxpayers. He will speak to the Planning and Zoning Commission about this also.

The Town Hall budget has no increase. Demolitions/Evictions have no increase. There were 6 evictions this year.

Account 1065 – Salary adjustment is \$129,066. This year the way the weeks fall, there is an extra pay period. Mr. Michaud informed the Board that the FEMA submittal to the State for the snow storm in January is \$50,000+ and at roughly 75%, the Town could conceivably received \$38,000.

Adjournment

MOTION (JOYSE) SECONDED (CLEARY) AND PASSED TO ADJOURN THE HEARING AT 10:15 PM.

Submitted by _____
Lori Smith, Clerk